

## POWER OF THE PRESS

ITS MISSION IS TO LEAD THE PEOPLE, NOT TO FOLLOW.

The Tone and Tendency Are More Lofty Than the Life That Reads It, Says Rev. Madison C. Peters—Remarks on the Prevalence of Murder and Suicide.

The most influential factor in our American life is the newspaper. The mother dies, the school is for our younger days, and the church reaches only a part of the community. The newspaper reaches everybody. It comes to us not only as a news teller, but also as an oracle. It not only reflects public sentiment, but also shapes it. With few exceptions, I can truthfully say the newspapers of this city are daily preaching sobriety, temperance and honesty in every department of life.

Here and there a sensational sheet becomes a sewer and publishes the putrefying details of vice and shame and magnifies a good man's honest intentions into a public scandal. But the daily press in New York city, with few exceptions, has been quick to denounce wrongdoing in high and low places, swift to recognize merit in public life and defend the oppressed, and in its tone and tendency is far above the majority of the life that reads it.

There are recreant editors, unfair reporters and unclean columns, just as there are renegade preachers, praying defaulters and sanctimonious robbers of widows and orphans. But why is it that the New York Daily Sewer exhausts all its editions when its columns are filthiest? The diseased appetites of the people demand unhealthy intelligence, and newspapers are made to sell.

If you want a pure newspaper, don't buy anything but a pure newspaper. The demand will control the supply. Newspaper men will tell you that the greatest trial of their profession is the people's demand for the sensational instead of the sensible. But, gentlemen journalist, it is your sacred mission to lead the people, not to follow them. If you must have a scandal column, label it "Deadly Poison." Benjamin Harris, a pioneer journalist of America, in issuing the prospectus of his "Public Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestic," published September, 1690, quaintly announces what he conceives to be the duties of an editor. Among these duties he mentions the following:

"Thirdly, that something may be done toward the curing or at least the charming of the spirit of lying which prevails among us, wherefore nothing shall be entered but what we have reason to believe true, repairing to the best fountains for our information. And when there appears any material mistake in anything that is collected it shall be corrected in the next."

Would to God that every modern editor were as conscientious as old Benjamin Harris. My high regard for gentlemen of the press justifies me in speaking plainly. Let there be no more catering to the tastes of morbid curiosity, no more intrusion into the privacy of the domestic circle, no personalities, no publication of mere rumors and shocking details of social evils, and let every newspaper man write that only to which he could suffix his name and which he would have his mother, wife or children read with pride.

## Working Women's Wrongs.

There are 250,000 women in New York city, exclusive of the domestic service, who are breadwinners, who have no male protectors and no means of support other than their own efforts. Though there are 343 trades open to them, an advertisement for one worker often brings a hundred applicants. Many of them are obliged to accept whatever wages are offered to them. There are trained sewing women in this city working 19 hours a day for 25 cents. Boys' knee pants bring 35 cents a dozen, trousers from 12½ to 25 cents and shirts from 6½ to 12½ cents.

To work as prisoners for crime would be a respite to many of them. The injustice, the oppression and the suffering of these 250,000! What a theme for the reformer or the novelist! The starvation wages! The shopgirl's weary hours of standing after she is through the thousand demands made upon her! Such inhumanity! Woman has as much right to her bread as man has. Pay women the same as men for the same work, if they do it equally well. The remedies I would suggest are:

First—Let every woman learn to do some one thing. Unskilled labor must take what is given.

Second—Never slight your work. The disparity between men's wages and women's is largely due to difference in the grade of work. Show the same determination to reach the top that male workers do.

Third—Train our women for housework. This is the solution of the question for the women who cannot earn a living at sewing or in a factory. There is nothing menial in the common work of the house.

Fourth—Let our storekeepers and manufacturers be given distinctly to understand that the low wages they pay contribute more to the social evil than all other causes combined.

Fifth—Let woman cease her inhumanity to woman. Women oppress women as much as men. They beat down to the lowest figure the woman who works for them and the next minute spend 10 times as much on the finified fooleries of fashion.

Sixth—Show the shopgirls and sewing women more sympathy. Do what you can to cheer the women who have to fight the battles of life alone.

MADISON C. PETERS.

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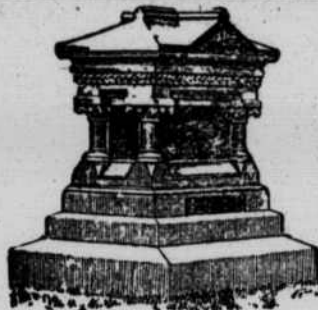
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